

## A Guide to Partnering With Young Leaders to End Youth Homelessness

# Training Tool 2: Recruiting & Hiring Youth Partners

This training tool is designed to help professionals and organizations create an equitable process for hiring youth partners as part of the campaign to end youth homelessness in Connecticut.

Employing youth as partners is the “First Commandment” to cultivating authentic youth partnership. Evidence suggests that programs and systems designed for youth are more effective if youth are involved as partners in the design process, and Connecticut’s Reaching Home campaign for ending youth homelessness supports this view. For example, the Youth Action Hub at the Institute for Community Research was formed in 2015 to provide youth leadership and youth-adult partnership in policy advocacy, system design, and research towards ending youth homelessness in Connecticut by the end of 2020. The Youth Action Hub is an innovative model nationally that has demonstrated that youth partnership is not only a critical piece in ending youth homelessness, it has had a positive effect on youth throughout the state who want to be more involved in decisions made about them. Critical to the success of the Hub is *employing* young people who have experienced homelessness as staff of the organization, and providing *low-barrier employment* that includes consistent mentorship by a professional with expertise in youth homelessness and youth-adult partnership.

**This tool describes how to put into practice the First Commandment of Authentic Youth Partnership:  
*Offer employment.***

Recruitment and hiring processes described in this tool are based on practices developed and tested at the Youth Action Hub. The difference in the Hub’s practices, as compared to standard practices, is the intentional adjustment of the process to be accessible and equitable for young people who have experienced homelessness. Research shows that young people who have experienced homelessness are more likely to have limited or no experience obtaining employment.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, recruitment and hiring practices should be tailored to meet young people where they are at. For example, employers should not assume that youth partners will be using internet job search engines or other traditional avenues for job seeking. As employment experiences may vary among youth partners, it is important to advertise through multiple channels as well as create communications and application materials that are engaging and accessible.

## Define the Job Position

What kind of work would youth partners be involved in? What are the expectations about the work that they will be doing? Just as with any job position, the expectations of youth partners should be articulated ahead of time so that youth partners understand clearly what the job entails and can assess whether they are a good fit for the position. If youth partners will be spending a lot of time in meetings, this is important to mention, as this might not fit every individuals' interests or skills. Ensure that the expectations are developmentally appropriate and allow for on-the-job training and growth. Expectations should focus more on motivation to learn new skills, interpersonal skills, and interest in the work, rather than on specific technical skills or duties. Being clear on the expectations within the work environment will help to reduce anxiety and confusion once hired into the position. However, do not over-define youth partners' role ahead of time. Job descriptions should describe the core work and goals, but should remain open and flexible for youth partners to define their roles and direction of their work over time. Restricting youth partners' role to something that has been predefined by others can lead to high turnover and a missed opportunity for youth partners to contribute to the campaign in meaningful ways. Once youth partners are hired, use the *Training Tool 5* to facilitate or support a process for determining the role of youth partners.

### Tips on What to Include in Job Descriptions for Youth Partners

DON'T INCLUDE	DO INCLUDE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dry terms, internal lingo, or acronyms</b> Youth partners may not know terms that are commonly used in the campaign.</li> <li>• <b>A formal educational requirement, like a high school diploma or GED</b> Youth partners may still be in high school, or may not have completed high school.</li> <li>• <b>Transportation as a requirement.</b> Transportation is a common barrier. Assistance with transportation may be needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engaging, action-oriented language</b></li> <li>• <b>General activities that describe the type of work</b></li> <li>• <b>Description of soft skills needed</b> For example, teamwork and collaboration skills are important for youth partnership.</li> <li>• <b>Describe the work environment</b> This will help youth partners determine if it is a right fit for them.</li> <li>• <b>On-the-job training and professional development opportunities</b> These types of opportunities are attractive, and important to developing young leaders.</li> <li>• <b>The hourly wage and method of payment</b></li> <li>• <b>Location of the work</b></li> <li>• <b>If position is permanent or temporary</b></li> <li>• <b>Equal opportunity employer and non-discriminatory practices statement</b></li> </ul>

## Develop Candidate Selection Criteria

Young people who have experienced homelessness contribute unique expertise to ending youth homelessness by helping to identify new areas of prevention, address barriers to service access, help to improve the quality of housing and services for young people, and much more. However, like other partnerships, not all youth partners will have the same expertise, interests or the same skill sets. Homelessness affects a diverse population of young people that have had a wide range of experiences. Some young people are experiencing homelessness for the first time, while others have had experiences with housing instability or homelessness that began earlier in their lives. Although every experience of homelessness is unique, youth homelessness disproportionately impacts African American or Black young people, young parents, LGBTQ+ youth (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer), and individuals with a mental illness. Many young people who have experienced homelessness have been involved in key systems, such as child welfare and juvenile justice, and experience accumulated discrimination and hardships based on *intersections* among race, gender (including gender identity), sexual orientation, age, and disability that affect many young people experiencing homelessness. These intersections are important to address in youth homelessness, as it highlights the overlapping and interdependent ways that discrimination and disadvantage occur together to disproportionately impact specific groups of people.<sup>2,3</sup>

Because of the complexity of youth homelessness and the diverse populations it disproportionately affects, no one youth partner will have all the expertise needed to develop effective policies and services that meet the diverse needs of young people. Therefore, plan to hire a diverse team of youth partners that represent the diversity and intersectionality of young people's experiences and develop selection criteria based on skills needed for specific working environments and activities that are part of the work. To obtain up-to-date statistics on the diversity of young people who have experienced homelessness in Connecticut, go to <https://cceh.org/data/interactive/youthcountdata/>.

## Create a Job Application

The Youth Action Hub uses an online job application form that can be conveniently accessed from social media and shared across communications channels, increasing reach and reducing barriers for young people who do not have transportation to get to and from an office to complete a paper-based application. SurveyMonkey and Google Forms are examples of free online software for creating a job application. Applications should be short and simple, and ask about key qualifications for the job. An example of an online job application for a youth partner is included in the Appendix (page 7).

## Attract the Right Candidates

If the job description is vague or unclear, intimidating, or does not match the interests or skillsets of youth partners, few people will apply. Some youth partners love the idea of going out in the community and doing outreach, while other youth may find this type of work daunting. Sitting in meetings may not appeal to some youth partners, while others are excited about the opportunity to share their expertise and work collaboratively with others. Make sure that you are attracting the right candidates and skillsets based on some of the activities that are involved in the work. Offer a job opportunity that is flexible and allows for a range of interests and skillsets that match what youth partners could offer. In addition, professional development options for youth partners will attract candidates who are serious about learning new skills and working in a professional setting, and will keep youth partners involved in the effort and developing as leaders.

## **Recruit Candidates**

The recruitment plan should be tailored to the characteristics of potential youth partners. What is the focus of the work that the youth partner will be involved in? Are there specific places or communication channels that should be targeted? If the focus of work is on the intersections between juvenile justice and youth homelessness for example, then recruiting youth partners with this specific expertise will be important, and strategies could involve reaching out to program personnel in Juvenile Matters Court Support Services or to the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance that has a Justice Advisors program of young leaders with lived experience. Staff at youth-serving programs can help to recruit youth partners with specific expertise. However, always be explicit with staff about the qualifications for the job. Depending on the job expectations, young people who are experiencing a housing crisis or other crises may not be in the best position to meet the expectations of the job because of the unpredictability of what will be happening in their lives. If the expectation is that youth partners will meet only once or twice, this may be okay, but consistency may be a challenge for some. Weighing your organization's ability to provide equitable transportation and flexible hours with a young person's individual struggles will help determine if a partnership will be sustainable in the long-term.

If your organization is just starting their youth/adult partnership, a broad recruitment plan may be the best approach. If there are already youth partners on the team, they can also use their personal and professional networks to identify possible candidates for the position.

Sample job postings are included in the Appendix (page 11).

## **Review Applications and Select Candidates to Interview**

If possible, it is best to include other youth partners in reviewing applications and selecting the candidates to interview. See the Appendix for an example of an Application Review Matrix to select candidates to interview (page 14).

## **Interview Candidates**

If possible, other youth partners should be involved in creating the interview questions and interviewing candidates. See the Appendix for an example of Interview Questions and Interview Rating Scale (page 15).

## **Make the Hiring Decision**

When starting to hire youth partners, the hiring decision may be up to one person, such as a mentor. However, if a team of youth partners exist, they should be involved in the decision making about who is to be hired.

# References

1. Rosenberg R, Kim Y. Aging out of foster care: Homelessness, post-secondary education, and employment. *Journal of public child welfare* 2018;12:99-115.
2. Page M. Forgotten youth: Homeless LGBT youth of color and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. *Northwestern Journal of Law & Social Policy* 2017;12:17.
3. Zufferey C. *Homelessness and social work: An intersectional approach*: Routledge; 2016.

# APPENDIX

# SAMPLE ONLINE APPLICATION

## Part-time Job Opportunity

### JOB POSITION: Youth Action Hub Researcher

Openings in both Bridgeport and New Haven, CT

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Please answer all questions to the best of your ability
- Click "Next" to advance to the next set of questions, and click "Prev" to return to previous pages

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#### PLEASE NOTE:

\*If selected, you must be a citizen or authorized to work in the United States, and documentation regarding your status will be required.

\*If you are a minor, you may be required to provide a statement of age/working papers obtained through your high school.

If you have any questions about the job or the documentation needed for employment, please feel free to contact xxxx.

End of Block: Default Question Block

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Start of Block: Basic Information

Q1) What is your full name?

\_\_\_\_\_

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Q2) What Youth Action Hub Researcher position are you applying to?

- Bridgeport (1)
- New Haven (2)

*Skip To: If What Youth Action Hub Researcher position are you applying to? = Bridgeport*

*Skip To: If What Youth Action Hub Researcher position are you applying to? = New Haven*

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Q3) Do you have access to a reliable form of transportation to get around Bridgeport in order to conduct outreach? (This includes bus, bicycles and/or walking, if this is how you get around.)

Yes (1)

No (2)

*Display This Question:*

*If What Youth Action Hub Researcher position are you applying to? = New Haven*

Q4) Do you have access to a reliable form of transportation to get around New Haven in order to conduct outreach? (This includes bus, bicycles and/or walking, if this is how you get around.)

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q5) Are you available for at least 6 hours each week to work?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q6) Please provide us with at least one way to contact you

Email (1) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (2) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Basic Information

Start of Block: Tell us a little bit about your qualifications for this position

**In the following section we will be asking you about your qualifications for this position. Please add more information in the text boxes to explain your answer.**

Q7) Do you have any experience conducting outreach to young adults? (Experience is not required.)

Yes (Please describe your experience conducting outreach.) (1)  
\_\_\_\_\_

No (2)

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Q8) Are you interested in gaining skills in research?

Yes (Please use the space below to explain why) (1)

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No (Please use the space below to explain why) (2)

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Strongly qualified applicants for this position are individuals who have recently experienced homelessness or housing instability as a youth/young adult (16-24 years old).

Housing instability means being in a situation where you have to find another place to sleep because you can no longer stay at your home for reasons like you were kicked out, or lost your housing, or left because you felt unsafe or for other reasons. Some examples of housing unstable situations are: sleeping on a friend's couch, moving around a lot, motel, shelter, bus station, outside, or other temporary places.

\*Note: Experience is not required, but preference will be given to those who have had experience of homelessness/housing instability as a youth/young adult.

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Q9) Have you recently experienced housing instability as a youth/young adult?

Yes (Please use the space below to explain.) (1)

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No (Please use the space below to explain.) (2)

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Q10) Do you feel like you have a professional work ethic and that you can follow strict procedures to protect study participants' confidentiality? Feel free to give an example.

Yes (Please use the space below to explain.) (1)

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No (Please use the space below to explain.) (2)

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Q11) Do you have any prior employment, work, or volunteer experience?

\*Note: Prior work experience is NOT a requirement for this position

Yes (1)

No (2)

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Q12) Please list your previous jobs and/or volunteer experiences

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Q13) Please tell us why you are interested in this position.

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Q14) How did you hear about this job? If you heard about this position through a person or organization, please tell us the name of the person or organization.

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End of Block: Tell us a little bit about your qualifications for this position

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Start of Block: Block 2

Thank you for submitting an application to the Youth Action Hub Researcher position. We will be contacting qualified applicants and holding interviews as soon as possible. Thank you so much for your interest in this position.

End

## SAMPLE JOB POSTING

# The Youth Action Hub is Hiring!

**Position start date: April 1, 2017**

### **What is the Youth Action Hub?**

The Youth Action Hub ([www.youthactionhub.org](http://www.youthactionhub.org)) is a youth-led center of research and advocacy at the Institute for Community Research, and is an innovative model nationally. We are youth/young adults (16-24 years of age) with first-hand experience of housing instability who are trained as action researchers. The Hub provides a critical youth voice in current research and policy advocacy around youth homelessness in Connecticut.

### **Who is the Institute for Community Research?**

The Institute for Community Research ([www.icrweb.org](http://www.icrweb.org)) is a nonprofit organization located in Hartford that helps communities and organized groups advocate for community change through collaborative research.

### **What kind of work would I do at the Youth Action Hub?**

Recently, the state of Connecticut was approved for a two-year grant of \$6.5 million to develop and implement a plan to help end youth homelessness. At the Youth Action Hub, your role would be as “Advisor” to a coalition of policymakers and service providers across the state to help end youth homelessness. This would involve overseeing and informing the creation of programs and policies designed for young people experiencing homelessness. For example, you would:

- Work in a team to create a “system map” that shows the things that are working well and the things that need improvement for meeting the needs of young people who are experiencing housing instability;
- Help design housing solutions and programs that are youth-friendly and effective for young people;
- Review grant applications and be part of selecting programs to be funded by the state to help young people;
- Participate in site visits to observe the funded programs in action and to meet with young people (clients of programs) to hear about their experiences with the programs.

This position is part-time and involves 4-8 hours per month.

### **How do I know if I qualify for this position?**

We are looking to hire five young people (16-24 years old) from around the state who are passionate about speaking about their experiences with housing instability, and are willing to use those experiences to help advise our partners throughout the state.

Housing instability can involve but is not limited to:

- Moving from place to place (house-hopping)
- Sleeping outside, in bus/train stations, or abandoned buildings
- Sleeping in a car
- Staying in a place that isn't safe from physical or emotional harm or neglect
- Not being sure where you can stay from day to day
- Staying at hotels for extended periods of time
- Sleeping in a shelter

### **Where is this job?**

This position can be done remotely (wherever you live or in a library or other place where you access a computer) except for some meetings or events that will require travel to Hartford. For the first few months, there will be meetings in Hartford every other week that you will need to attend in person; after that, the in-person meetings will be held every other month. The other meetings will be held via phone or videoconference. Meetings will typically last about 2 hours.

### **Do I need to have transportation to get to/from Hartford?**

No. The Institute for Community Research will pay for your transportation to/from Hartford that we coordinate when in-person meetings are necessary.

### **What are the benefits of working at the Youth Action Hub?**

- \$12 per hour compensation
- Training and career-building opportunities
- Experience working in a professional setting (great resume-builder)
- Professional networking opportunities with representatives of state institutions, legislators, and local organizations
- Meaningful work that contributes to positive change
- The chance to tell your story and be heard

Please make sure to have necessary documents ready so you can complete our tax and employment forms. These documents can include a state-issued photo ID or student ID, social security card, birth certificate, and passport.

### **How do I apply for this position?**

You can apply online at [https://yalesurvey.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_8oHXUpZAxq8bGir](https://yalesurvey.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_8oHXUpZAxq8bGir)

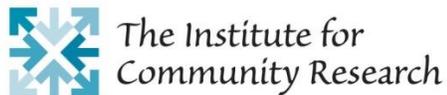
The information you provide on this application will be kept confidential. It will only be used to make sure we create a diverse group of members who have personal experiences with housing instability so that we can better represent all youth in CT. Your information will not be shared with others and will be kept in our encrypted computer database.

### **What happens after I apply?**

We will notify all applicants by email once we have finalized selecting applicants for the position. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Heather Mosher at (503) 437-3523 or by email at [heather.mosher@icrweb.org](mailto:heather.mosher@icrweb.org)

***The Institute is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer***

# SAMPLE JOB FLYER



The Institute for  
Community Research



## Part-time Job Opportunity

### JOB POSITION: Youth Action Hub Researcher

**Looking to hire an individual who can provide youth voice on youth homelessness and housing instability in Connecticut**

**DEADLINE TO APPLY:** Position open until filled.

The Institute for Community Research (ICR), a non-profit community-based organization located in Hartford, CT, has a job opening for individuals who:

- are interested in gaining skills in conducting research and advocacy;
- are interested in working with a coalition of people and organizations (other youth, service providers, attorneys, legislators);
- would like to be part of creating change in policies and systems in Connecticut to make things easier for youth and young adults living in temporary or unstable housing situations to get the information and services they need, when they need it;
- have some recent knowledge and/or experience with being a youth or young adult living in a temporary or unstable housing situation (for example: staying on someone's couch, moving from house to house, staying with friends for a short time, staying in a motel, or living in any temporary situation);
- have some recent knowledge and/or experience trying to get information or services (like food, housing, medical, and so on) as a youth or young adult;
- have a professional work ethic and see themselves as a team player; and
- can commit to working a minimum of 4 hours each week on Fridays between noon and 4 pm

**\* No experience in research or advocacy is required. However, preference will be given to those who have had recent experience as a youth/young adult in an unstable housing situation. Unstable housing refers to not having a safe or consistent place to stay and/or having to stay in places temporarily other than your home.**

**As a Youth Action Hub Researcher, you would:**

- Learn how to design and conduct research (interviews and online surveys)
- Help raise awareness of youth homelessness and create trainings for schools and youth organizations
- Work with other team members to build and maintain a large coalition of young people across the state that will provide input on housing policies and practice for young people
- Work with project staff and partner organizations to improve the lives of youth and young adults who are living in temporary or unstable housing situations in the state of Connecticut
- Meet with legislators to advocate for changes in policies
- Abide by all regulations for the protection of human research participants and proper scientific conduct

**Youth Action Hub Researchers will receive competitive compensation. This is a six month position with the potential for continuation depending on funding.** The Youth Action Hub is funded by the Melville Charitable Trust. To learn more about the Youth Action Hub, go to the website: [www.youthactionhub.org](http://www.youthactionhub.org). ICR offers a supportive, multi-ethnic and interdisciplinary work environment and opportunities for growth.

**To Apply:** Complete an online job application: <http://bit.ly/YAHjob2018>

***The Institute is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.***

# SAMPLE APPLICANT TRACKING FORM

Applicant Name	Position	Application Reviewed By:	Selected for Interview	Reason Selected / Not Selected	Interview Date	Interviewers	Interview Rating	Recommend for Position
Jane Doe	YAH Researcher	Angel, Natalie, Mel, Diana, Jammel	Yes	Meets all eligibility requirements and has housing instability experience. She is very interested in the work, and has experience working with other organizations and proposing new ideas. She feels very deeply for this topic and sees this job opportunity as something that will help her with her career. Loves working in a team.	3/1/2018	Angel and Diana	All skills were rated as "Excellent," except was rated "Average" on her level of comfort expressing her ideas.	Yes

# SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Applicant Interview Questions

### Previous Job Experience

1. What is your prior work/volunteer/after school activities experience?

### Expectations / Motivation for this Job

2. Why did you apply to this position?
3. Based on what you know about the position, which aspects of it would be most attractive to you? Least attractive?
4. What are you expecting this position to be like?
5. Why should you be hired for this position? (What would you bring to the Youth Action Hub?)

### Interpersonal Skills / Managing Conflict

6. How would people describe you in and out of work?
7. Would you rather work on a team or on your own?
8. Describe what a “team” environment means to you.
9. What experience have you had working as a member of a team? What are the advantages?
10. What role do you usually play when you work in a group?
11. What experience do you have working in and around diverse groups of people?
12. What is your experience with public speaking?
13. Describe a situation when you found it necessary to confront someone at work? How did you handle it?

### Overall Job Performance / Dependability

14. What do you consider to be your strengths?
15. What do you consider to be your weaknesses?
16. How would you describe your attendance and punctuality habits?
17. If we hired you, what could we count on you for without fail?
18. Where do you see yourself in 2 years?

### Additional Job Requirements

19. What is your availability?
20. Would you be comfortable talking to people about your experience with unstable housing when we do legislative work or work with our partners?
21. Do you have documents to indicate that you are a citizen or authorized to work in the US? (passport, state ID, birth certificate, SS card)
22. If you are under age 18, we would need a signed statement of your age and permission to work through your high school. Of course, we would help with this process. Does this apply to you? Would this be a problem to get?

# SAMPLE INTERVIEW RATING SCALE

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Skills	Excellent	Average	Poor
<b>Motivation / Interest</b> (Interest in gaining research skills and doing some form of advocacy; interest in working on the issue of youth homelessness and working with other professionals/ stakeholders in the coalition)			
<b>Communication / Interpersonal</b> (Expresses ideas clearly; perceives and reacts sensitively to the needs and actions of others; can relate to diverse people of varied backgrounds; enjoys working on a team; motivated to improve communication and public speaking skills; is flexible and can adjust their behavior to the situation, is comfortable expressing ideas in a group and values hearing other's ideas and learning from others.)			
<b>Dependability</b> (punctual and good attendance)			
<b>Additional Requirements</b>  <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 20px;">Available to work on Fridays</div> <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 20px;">Would be comfortable sharing unstable housing experience</div> <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 20px;">Have required legal documents to work</div>			

Recommend for position without reservation

Recommend for position with some reservation (please attach reasons)

Cannot recommend for position (please attach reasons)

Other comments: